

WORKSHOPS FOR NAORRR CONVENTION 2023

Friday, January 6 11:20 AM-12:20 PM (Choose one only for each attendee)

1. **Daniel Matt: "Shechinah: The Feminine Aspect of God"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
One of the boldest contributions of *Kabbalah* is the idea that God is equally female and male. Daniel Matt will explore with us how the concept of *Shechinah* (the feminine aspect of God) develops from its rabbinic origins to its full flowering in the *Zohar*, where *Shechinah* is identified with the Sabbath Bride.
2. **Roberta Schwartz: "Changing the Title of Primo Levi's Famous Poem"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
There are new revelations concerning Primo Levi's most famous poem. Sources do not come from Italy but from Provence and the Turin Siddur, which we will examine.
3. **Don Splansky: "Biblical Stories We Thought We Knew...But Didn't"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
Why did Jacob "adopt" Ephraim and Manasseh as his own, and why did he choose that time to say, "Rachel died to my sorrow"? (And what did those words really mean?) A look at that story and two others will show the real meaning behind "rash vows" and "me and my big mouth."
4. **Hank Zoob: "A Lifetime of Genesis"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
Hank will speak about some significant insights into Genesis based on his book "*A Lifetime of Genesis*." In concert with the precept that the lives of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are our lives, he will also share aspects of his life that parallel the lives of our founders and challenge the attendees to do the same.
5. **Ed Scheinerman: "A Mathematical Look at Voting"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
At its heart, democracy is a process by which the individual opinions of the members of a group are combined to make a decision. Politicians, pundits, and philosophers all have their ways of understanding the messy world of self-governance. And now for something completely different: How do mathematicians think about this?

Saturday, January 7 11:30 AM-12:30 PM (Choose only one for each attendee)

1. **Daniel Matt: "How the Zohar Reimagines Torah"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
The Zohar emerged in 13th-century Spain. How does this mystical masterpiece interpret and reimagine the Torah? How can a mystical approach to Torah enrich our lives today? Daniel Matt will address these questions by teaching several passages from his annotated translation: *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*.
2. **Michael Zedek: "Folklore and Stories: A Window to the Soul"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
Scholars of literature suggest there is a specific and limited typology to stories. How different traditions tell the "same" story, then, may serve as a window into the virtues and values of a culture and, more intimately, for our souls.
3. **Ralph Mecklenburger: "Would We Call Isaiah a Liar?"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
Today if you claim God talks to you, people may question your sanity! So what might contemporary science tell us about what prophecy actually was?
4. **Amy Scheinerman: "How Do I Bless the Bad?"** (Will attend; 1 or 2)
The rabbis impress upon us the obligation to "bless the bad just as we bless the good," offering us very different blessings to say when good and bad befall us. What is prescribed in principle is often more difficult to carry out in life, except perhaps for Talmud's Dr. Pangloss. We will study

a story in the *Gemara* that explores the nooks and crannies of this thinking and its implications for how we might think about, and respond to, the bad that befalls us in our lives.

Saturday, January 7 2:30 PM-3:30 PM

1. **Andrea Weiss: “From the Depths I Call to You; Tapping into the Power of Psalms”** (Will attend; 1 or 2)

For thousands of years, people have turned to the book of Psalms in times of joy, anxiety, crisis, and gratitude, and in moments of reflection and deep spiritual longing. We will study selected Psalms as we consider what makes these biblical texts so compelling and how they can speak to us in meaningful ways today.

Sunday, January 8 2:30 PM-3:30 PM

1. **Diane Steinbrink: “The Magic of Stephen Sondheim”** (Will attend; 1 or 2)

In this lecture Diane will discuss the life and amazing work of the late Stephen Sondheim. She will talk about his growing up, his family life and its impact on the person he became. She will discuss his collaborators and those who helped him in his career and those whom he helped in their careers. You will hear about his many awards and his unique human qualities in relation to others. She will talk about some of his most famous plays, such as *FOLLIES*, *A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC*, *SWEENEY TODD*, *SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE*, and others, and the characters in them. His death was mourned not only by the theatre community, but also by many others whose lives he touched. Audience participation will follow.

Sunday, January 8 3:30 PM-4:30 PM

1. **Amy Scheinerman: “In the Belly of the Beast, Partner with a Demon”** (Will attend; 1 or 2)

The Talmud’s stories about rabbis who visit Rome, thereby entering the belly of the beast, take on strong themes and ask difficult questions. One strange story in the *Bavli*, concerning a rabbinic mission to Rome, opens a conversation on what constitutes success or failure (and do we always know the difference?), purity or impurity (how do we recognize and respond to them?), demon or miracle (sometimes one in the same). The Rabbis convey, with both humor and empathy, that effectively dealing with our enemies sometimes depends on how we deal with those who are not our enemies.